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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/29/2039
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [AR](#)
SUBJECT: ARGENTINA: PRESIDENT'S POPULARITY DECLINING AHEAD
OF THE JUNE MIDTERMS

REF: A. BUENOS AIRES 0429 AND PREVIOUS
[1](#)B. 08 BUENOS AIRES 0980

Classified By: DCM Tom Kelly for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner (CFK) has experienced a steady decline in her approval rating and personal image since late 2007, and has experienced another dip recently. After enjoying a 56% approval rating in December 2007 upon her inauguration, the President's approval sunk to a low of 28% in June/July 2008 at the height of the government's conflict with the farm sector. In October 2008, her approval rating bounced back slightly to around 35-36%, only to begin a gradual decline again with the onset of the global economic crisis. Former president Nestor Kirchner (NK) is widely expected to announce by May 9 that he will head a slate of congressional candidates from Buenos Aires province. NK's popularity, while slightly higher than CFK's, has largely tracked the President's ratings over the past year, although CFK's image suffered more during the depths of the 2008 farm conflict.

[1](#)2. (C) Recent nationwide, door-to-door polls by leading polling firms Poliarquia and Ipsos indicate CFK's current approval rating hovers in the low 30 percentile range, a decline from the upper 30 and lower 40 percentile in late December 2008/early January 2009. Poliarquia's polling was conducted after Congress approved moving up the midterms, but before NK publicly floated the idea of "testimonial candidacies," i.e., having the highly popular Buenos Aires province Governor Daniel Scioli and mayors boost the Kirchner (FpV) slates by running as candidates for congressional or city council positions they do not intend to assume (ref A). Ipsos' polling was conducted prior to both of these two events. Poliarquia provided poloff with its yet unpublished results from a poll conducted the first week of April. Poliarquia's findings point to a steady drop since January 2009 in the percentage of Argentines who approve of CFK's governance, declining from 41% in January to 33% in April while those who disapproved of her administration grew from 54% in January to 62% in April. Ipsos has yet to publish its April 2009 findings, but its March poll results give CFK a 31% approval rating, down from 36% in December 2008, while her disapproval rating grew from 61% in December to 67% in March.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The latest poll results indicate CFK's personal image has also dropped this year. According to Poliarquia, the percentage of Argentines who held a positive view of CFK fell from 28% in December 2008 to 25% in March 2009, while those who had a negative image of her grew from 41% in December to 43% in March. Ipsos polls show CFK's positive image at 36% in December and 32% in March while her negative image ratings increased from 61% in December to 66% in March. According to these findings, CFK's Vice-President Julio Cobos continues to lead the list as the most popular national leader, enjoying a 53% approval rating. (CFK maintains

chilly relations with Cobos, whose popularity soared following his July 2008 tie-breaking vote in the Senate against CFK's bill to increase agricultural export taxes.)

14. (C) Comment: These polls give a sense of how Kirchner trendlines are faring nationwide, and we report them in that spirit. The June 28 congressional elections will, however, be decided province by province, and there are signs that NK has written off other districts and is exclusively focused on the province of Buenos Aires. This electoral plum has been a Peronist stronghold for 20 years and remains key to NK's electoral prospects and the Kirchners' hopes for retaining their slim working majority in Congress. Even with polls showing no more than 30% intend to vote for him, NK is clearly counting on the opposition remaining divided.

WAYNE